

## **The American Veteran**

Edition 5, June 2005

Segment 3

**JIM BENSON:**

Welcome back. Learning to live a productive life with a disability is one of the biggest challenges a veteran may have to face.

Here's a story of how one retired reserve officer is meeting that challenge as head of V-A's dental services. Scott Wallace reports.

**SCOTT WALLACE:**

Bob Frame is a dentist and retired colonel with the Army Reserve. He's also in charge of the V-A's dental services.

**Dr. FRAME:**

As Assistant Undersecretary for Health, I'm responsible for policy and operational guidance for our field dental services for V-A dentistry as a whole. We have about 202 clinics, we have about 3,000 employees total. Our dentists number 660 at this time. Last year we treated about 350,000 patients.

**SCOTT WALLACE:**

Even under normal circumstances, trying to handle such responsibilities would be a huge challenge. But Dr. Frame's circumstances are hardly ordinary.

**Dr. FRAME:**

We had five insurgents on an overpass just above us open fire. I was the first one shot.

**SCOTT WALLACE:**

Two years ago, Frame came within an inch of losing his life while serving in Iraq. He was part of a civil affairs team whose mission was to get Iraq's Health Ministry up and running after the fall of Saddam. On their way to meet health officials one day, they were ambushed in their Humvee in central Baghdad.

**Dr. FRAME:**

Well, first I took my arm because it had been severed and I tied it to my gas mask so I wouldn't lose it. I got out and was bleeding pretty profusely. We eventually fought our way out. When I stepped out of the Humvee, I knew it was a good time to say a prayer, and I did. I figured that was Job Number One. The Good Lord answered my prayers. I didn't want to leave any team members behind, and we did not."

SCOTT WALLACE:

Frame lost eight units of blood. He was medevac'd to Spain, and within three days, he was brought to Walter Reed Medical Center.

DR. FRAME:

The treatment at Walter Reed was awesome. The clinicians were great. Everything was made available to us and I think we received the best immediate care that anyone could ask for. The rehab process was excellent.

SCOTT WALLACE:

Dr. Frame underwent 13 surgeries to save and restore limited functions to his arm.

Dr. FRAME:

Learning everything from how to take a bath again to all the amenities of life and then just reintegrating back into the world and trying to be productive.

SCOTT WALLACE:

In addition to Iraq, Frame's many tours of duty have included Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where he led the public health team for the Civil Affairs Command.

Dr. FRAME:

Our initial mission was to start working with the Ministry of Health and help them to stand up their facilities.

SCOTT WALLACE:

That meant even finding medical books to replace collections burned by the Taliban.

Dr. FRAME:

Through connections that different team members had in the United States, the word started spreading and before we knew it we started receiving boxes of textbooks donated in the mail.

SCOTT WALLACE:

Now Dr. Frame is facing a different kind of mission – to serve his fellow veterans, and lead a satisfying and productive life.

Dr. FRAME:

You have to keep the spirit of the warrior in your heart all the time. And if you've been a soldier and you've been in conflict, you understand that If you survived it, perseverance is probably the greatest attribute. I would say don't ever lose focus of that. And probably the most difficult challenge most of us face is learning how to accept help.

SCOTT WALLACE:

Frame's personal experience has made him especially sensitive to the health needs of servicemen and women trying to reintegrate into life back home.

Dr. FRAME:

I think being a veteran does make a difference. It gives us an empathy and a bond that's unique.

JIM BENSON:

Dr. Frame would like to remind servicemen and women who are in need of dental care that they have 90 days from their discharge date to register for V-A's dental services.

Next up: The beginning of our year-long 75th Anniversary celebration.